

## WORLD'S SHORT STORIES.

The words of his wild fantasies (for he infrequently accompanied him) on the guitar with improvisations gave the result of that intense concentration and concentration to which I have previously alluded as observed in particular moments of the most artificial excitement. The words of one of these rhapsodies I never exactly remembered. I was perhaps more forcibly impressed with it than with the current of its meaning I can't perceive; and for the first full consciousness on the part of the tottering of his lofty upon her throne. The words were entitled "The Haunted" ran very nearly if not accu-

I  
of our valleys  
and stony  
valleys bounded  
and stony paths  
paths—reared its head  
through Thought's dominion  
of them  
though spread a pinion  
wide half so far

II  
know glorious golden  
and did that and flow  
was in the older  
one shot  
a gentle air that stilled  
the old  
comports plumed and puffed  
old went away

III  
in that happy valley  
in two luminous windows saw  
myself suddenly  
was well tuned law  
about a thorn where sitting  
especially  
the story well beginning,  
out of the realm was seen

IV  
and with power and radiance glowing  
was like pale fire  
which came down, down  
down

and covering enormous  
a cloud of golden whose sweet day  
was lost to me

a sense of increasing beauty  
the old and wisdom of their long

V  
in things in shades of sorrow  
against the mystery's high estate  
and of death, but never narrow  
and deep upon him, desolate

And round about his home the glory

That blushed and blushed

is a dim remembered story

of the old time entombed

VI  
and travelers now within that valley  
Through the red-litten sunbeams see  
that I now may move fantastically  
To discordant memory.

Thus like a rapid gurgling river,

Through the cold close

A gloomy thing ends not forever

And though but smiles no more.

I well remember that suggestions arising from this ballad led us into a state of thought wherein there became manifest an opinion of Usher's which I would not so much on account of Hereditary (for other men have thought alike as on account of the pertinacity with which he maintained it). This opinion, in its general form, was that of the sentence of all vegetable things I lack words to express the full extent or the earnest abasement of his persuasion. The belief, however, was connected, as I have previously hinted, with the gray stones of the house of his forefathers. The conditions of the sentence had been here, he imagined, fulfilled in the method of collection of these stones. Its evidence—the evidence of the sentence—was to be seen, he said (and I here started as he spoke), in the gradual yet certain condensation of an atmosphere of their own about the waters and the walls. The result was disreverberable, he added, in that silent yet unfortunate and terrible indomestic which for centuries had molded the destinies of his family and which made him what I now say him—what he was. Such opinions need no comment, and I will make none.

PART II.  
ONE evening, having informed me abruptly that the Lady Madeline was no more, he stated his intention of preserving her corpse for a fortnight, previously to its final interment, in one of the numerous vaults within the main walls of the building. The brother had been led to his resolution so he told me by consideration of the unusual character of the malady of the deceased, of certain obtrusive and eager inquiries on the part of her medical man and of the remote and exposed situation of the burial ground of the

family. I will not deny that when I called to mind the sinister countenance of the person whom I met upon the staircase on the day of my arrival at the house I had no desire to oppose what I regarded as, at best, but a harmless and in no means an unnatural presence.

At the request of Usher, I personally aided him in the arrangements for the temporary embalming. The body having been enclosed, we two alone bore it to its rest. The vault in which we placed it was small, damp and entirely without means of admission for light, being at great depth immediately beneath that portion of the building in which was my own sleeping apartment. It had been apparently in remote feudal times for the worst purposes of a dungeon keep and in later days as a place of deposit for possibly some other highly combustible substance, as a portion of its floor and the whole interior of a long gallery through which we reached it were carefully sheathed with copper. The door of massive iron had been also similarly protected. Its immense weight caused an unusually sharp grating sound as it moved upon its

had no glimpse of the moon or stars nor was there any flashing forth of the lightning. But the under surfaces of the huge masses of agitated vapor, as well as all terrestrial objects immediately around us, were glowing in the unnatural light of a faintly luminous and distinctly visible gaseous exhalation which enshrouded the mansion.

"You must not—you shall not behold this!" said I suddenly to Usher as I led him, with a gentle violence, from the window to a seat. "These appearances which bewilder you are merely electrical phenomena not uncommon, or it may be that they have their ghostly origin in the rank miasma of the tarn. Let us close this easement. The air is chilling and dangerous to your frame. Here is one of your favorite romances. I will read, and you shall listen, and so we will pass away this terrible night together."

The antique volume which I had taken up was the "Mad Frost" of Sir Launcelot Canning, but I had called it a favorite of Usher's more in respect than in expense, for in truth there is little in its smooth and imaginative prolixity which could have bid interest for the soft and spiritual ideality of my friend. It was, however, the only book immediately at hand.

Having deposited our mournful burden upon trustees within this region of gloom, we partially turned aside the ret unopened lid of the coffin and looked upon the face of the tenant. A striking similitude between the brother and sister now first arrested my attention, and Usher, dividing perhaps my thoughts, mumbled out some few words, from which I learned that the deceased and himself had been twins and that sympathies of a scarcely intelligible nature had always existed between them. Our glances rested not long upon the dead, for we could not regard her unmoved. There was a faint blush upon the bosom and the face, with that suspiciously lingering smile upon the lips which is so terrible in death. We repaid, and screwed down the lid and secured the door of iron.

And now, some days of bitter grief having elapsed, an observable change came over the features of the mental disorder of my friend. His ordinary manner had vanished. His ordinary occupations were neglected or forgotten. He roamed from chamber to chamber with hurried unequal and objective step. The pillar of his countenance had assumed if possible a more ghastly hue, but the luminousness of his eye had utterly gone out. The slow偶然的 darkness of his mind was heard no more, and a tremulous quiver as of extreme terror indifferently characterized his utterances. Still creeping upon me by slow yet several degrees the wild influences of his own fanatic yet impressive superstitions.

It was especially upon retiring to bed late in the night of the seventh or eighth day after the placing of the Lady Madeline within the dungeon that I experienced the full power of such feelings. Sleep came not near my couch, while the hours waned and waned away. I struggled to reason off the nervousness which had dominion over me. I endeavored to believe that much, if not all, of what I felt was due to the bewildering influence of the gloomy furniture of the room—or the fact and tattered draperies which tormented into motion by the breath of a rising tempest, swayed erratically to and fro upon the walls and rustled uneasily about the decorations of the bed. But my efforts were fruitless. An irrepressible tremor gradually pervaded my frame, and at length there sat upon my very heart an incubus of utterly causeless alarm. Shaking this off with a gasp and a struggle I uplifted myself upon the pillows, and, peering earnestly within the intense darkness of the chamber, hearkened—I know not why, except that an instinctive spirit prompted me—to certain low and indefinite sounds which came through the pauses of the storm at long intervals. I knew not whence. Overpowered by an intense sentiment of horror, uncontrollable yet unendurable, I threw on my clothes with haste, for I felt that I should sleep no more during the night, and endeavored to arouse myself from the pitiable condition into which I had fallen by pacing rapidly to and fro through the apartment.

I had taken but few turns in this manner when a light step on an adjoining staircase arrested my attention. I presently recognized it as that of Usher. In an instant afterward he stepped with a gentle touch at my door and entered, bearing lamp. His countenance was, as usual, cadaverously wan; but, moreover, there was a species of mad hilarity in his eyes, an evidently restrained hysteria in his whole demeanor. His air appalled me, but anything was preferable to the solitude which I had so long endured.

"And you have not seen it?" he said abruptly after having stared about him for some moments in silence—"you have not then seen it? But stay! You shall." Thus speaking and having carefully shaded his lamp, he hurried to one of the casements and threw it fully open to the storm. I resumed the narrative:

The impetuous fury of the entering gust nearly lifted us from our feet. It was, indeed, a tempestuous yet sternly beautiful night, and one wildly singular in its terror and its beauty. A whirlwind had apparently collected its force in our vicinity, for there were frequent and violent alterations in the direction of the wind, and the exceeding density of the clouds (which hung so low as to press upon the turrets of the house) did not prevent our perceiving the lifelike velocity with which they flew careering from all points against each other, without passing away into the distance. I say that even their exceeding density did not prevent our perceiving this. Yet we



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"And now the champion, having escaped from the terrible fury of the dragon, betook himself of the brassy shield and of the breaking up of the enchantment which was upon him, removed the carcass from out of the way before him and approached valiantly over the silver pavement of the castle to where the shield was upon the wall, which in sooth tarried not for his full coming, but fell down at his feet upon the silver floor with a mighty great and terrible ringing sound."

Oppressed, as I certainly was, upon the occurrence of this second and most extraordinary coincidence by a thousand conflicting sensations, in which wonder and extreme terror were predominant, I still retained sufficient presence of mind to avoid exciting by any observation the sensitive nervousness of my companion. I was by no means certain that he had noticed the sounds in question, although assuredly a strange alteration had during the last few minutes taken place in his demeanor. From a position fronting my own he had gradually brought around his chair so as to sit with his face to the door of the chamber, and thus I could but partially perceive his features, although I saw that his lips trembled, as if he were murmuring audibly. His head had dropped upon his breast, yet I knew that he was not asleep from the wide and rigid opening of the eye as I caught a glint of it in profile. The motion of his body, too, was at variance with this idea, for he rocked from side to side with a gentle yet constant and uniform sway.

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I resumed the narrative:

Suppose a fire broke out today in the house, office or store adjoining your home would you stand in regard to a fire insurance policy? Have you got one at all? Is it in a sound and reliable company? Now is the best time to think about it and to take out a policy if you haven't one. You can't get it afterwards you know. See us about a policy at once. The cost is small—the benefits great.

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